

Learning Theories Assignment

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Constructivism:

Constructivism is a theory which believes that learning is an active process by which the learner constructs their knowledge based on previous experiences and prior knowledge. It is based on the idea that new information is linked to an existing understanding and connections are made by the individual. These connections are made separately by each individual and all knowledge is constructed this way regardless of how the person is taught. I feel that this is my own learning strategies and thus is the way I enjoy teaching. As often as I can, I try to link what I am teaching to past knowledge they may have or to other subjects that they might be taking. If I can get students to see the relevance of the material I am presenting (especially new concepts) by linking it to something they already have a deep understanding of, or have had personal experience with, then I believe that the new information is received with a greater understanding.

Discovery Learning:

Discovery learning is a learning theory in which one attempts to learn a concept through inquiry-based instruction (i.e. hypothesizing and testing) for themselves. This builds deep connections by forcing the learner to draw on prior knowledge or past experiences to discover new facts and relationships. This is also a form of constructivist learning where the learner is building relationships based on what they already have an understanding of, but instead of being told facts and having them make the connections, they are exploring, performing, and/or manipulating experiments in order to learn the facts on their own. This relates to my teaching style because, as with constructivism, I believe it is important for students to make connections for themselves when learning. Of course there need to be some guidelines and steps put in place to lead the students self-learning in a productive direction and I have successfully planned a set of lessons based on this. I was successful with leading small groups over placement in this type of discovery based learning where they had to manipulate and explore hands-on demos and computer simulations to learn new concepts without me standing there teaching it to them.

Communities of Practice:

A community of practice involves a group of individuals who share a common passion for something and they learn how to do it better through regular interaction. This happens through sharing ideas and strategies, building innovations, discussing solutions, etc. This is a type of social learning and this often happens incidentally through social processes. I believe that students can learn more from each other than from me standing at the front of the class talking. In my lessons I regularly encourage all students to discuss with peers. This encourages them to have an opinion, hear other opinions, and form their own strategies and or solutions to

problems that they may not have been able to solve on their own. It encourages constructivism as it pulls on the prior knowledge/experience of the group as a whole in order to answer problems collectively. I believe learning is a social practice and we should be using large class sizes to our advantage to create communities of practice which all students can benefit from.

Social Development Theory:

One of the main themes in this theory is The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). The MKO refers to anyone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner. Within our classes we will have a wide range of students, those who understand the concept right away and those who will struggle. We can use this to our advantage and have the “more knowledgeable” student teach the weaker student. Vygotsky states that the learning experience then becomes a reciprocal experience for both the student and the teacher (or the students and the “more knowledgeable” peer). This is a beneficial learning experience for all members involved, and as with the communities of practice, I encourage social interaction within the class as much as I can. As long as there are guidelines put in place to foster productive ‘on-task’ discussion this type of learning is very beneficial and I believe a very important part of my own teaching practice/theory.

